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44

FABLES

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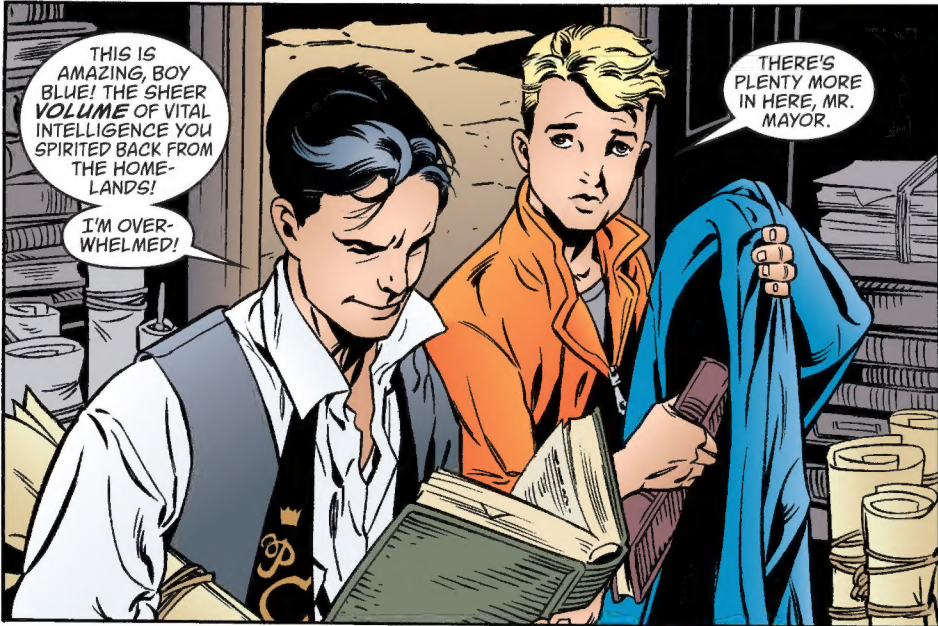
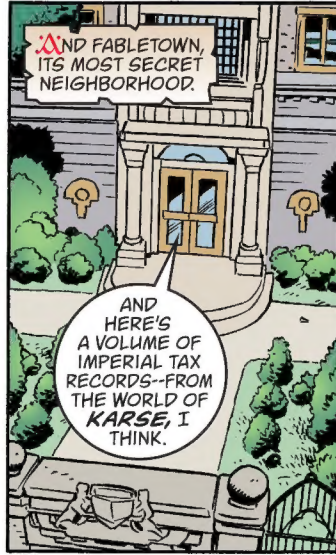
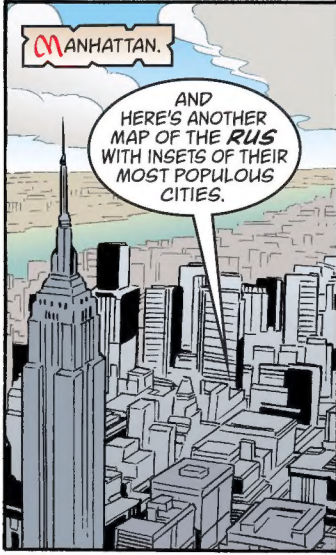
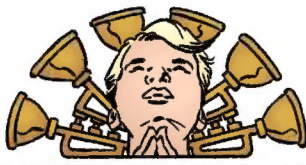


Feb 06

SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS

vertigo.com

JJ05



BACK TO BAGDAD

Chapter THREE of Arabian Nights (and days)

BILL WILLINGHAM
writer-creator

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I EMPTIED EVERY PRIVATE, PUBLIC OR MILITARY LIBRARY I COULD FIND WHILE MAKING MY WAY ACROSS THE EMPIRE.

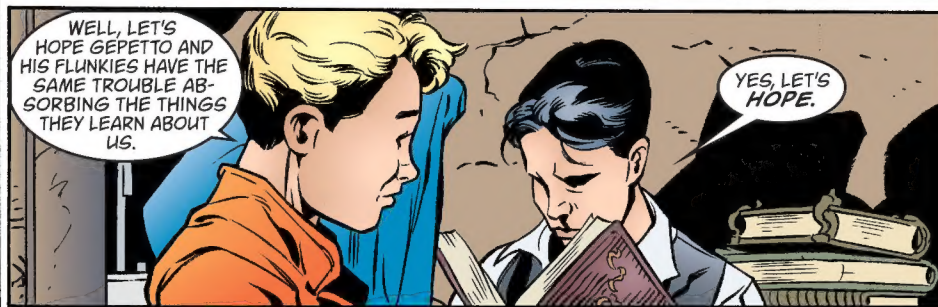
IF I CAN JUST REMEMBER WHERE I PUT THEM.

WE'LL BE YEARS--DECADES--ABSORBING ALL OF THIS INFORMATION.



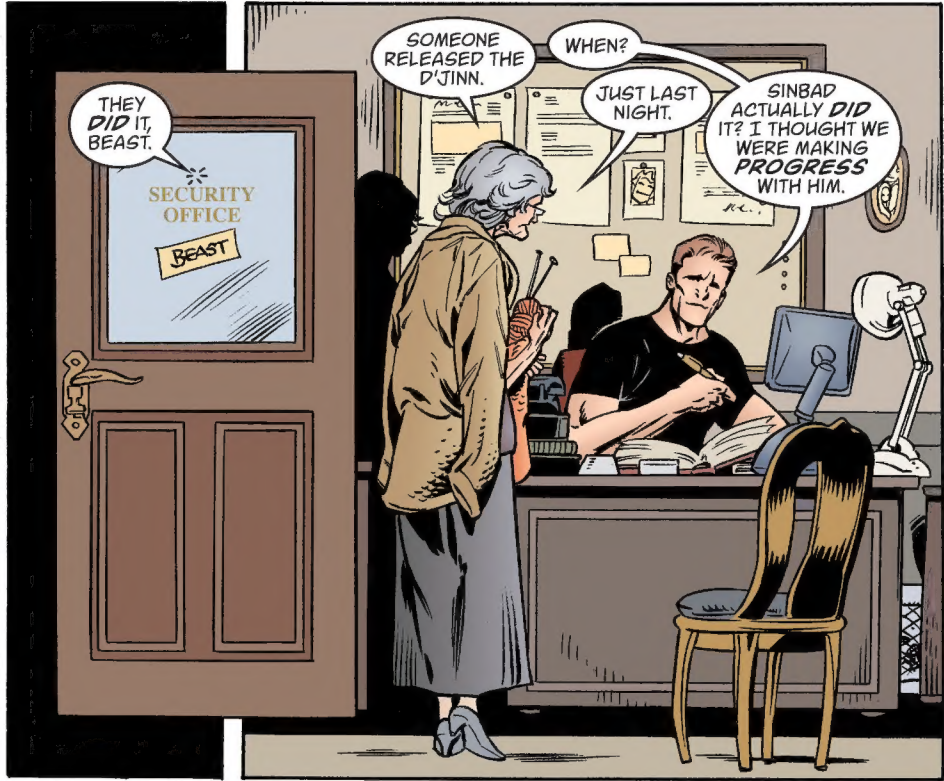
WHICH IS THE ETERNAL CURSE OF THE ESPIONAGE GAME.

BY THE TIME ONE CAN FULLY UNDERSTAND THE SECRETS WE STEAL FROM OUR ENEMY, MUCH OF IT WILL BE OBSOLETE.



WELL, LET'S HOPE GEPETTO AND HIS FLUNKIES HAVE THE SAME TROUBLE ABSORBING THE THINGS THEY LEARN ABOUT US.

YES, LET'S HOPE.



THEY DID IT, BEAST.

SECURITY OFFICE
BEAST

SOMEONE RELEASED THE D'JINN.

WHEN?

JUST LAST NIGHT.

SINBAD ACTUALLY DID IT? I THOUGHT WE WERE MAKING PROGRESS WITH HIM.



NO, IT WAS THAT OTHER ONE WHO ACTUALLY PULLED CORK ON THE CREATURE.

THAT JUMPED-UP MINOR CONJURER YUSUF, LARGE IN BLUSTER AND ARROGANCE TO CAMOUFLAGE WHAT HE LACKS IN ABILITY.



I CAN'T YET DETERMINE IF YUSUF ACTED ALONE OR AT SINBAD'S BIDDING.

HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE, FRAU TOTENKINDER, BEFORE--

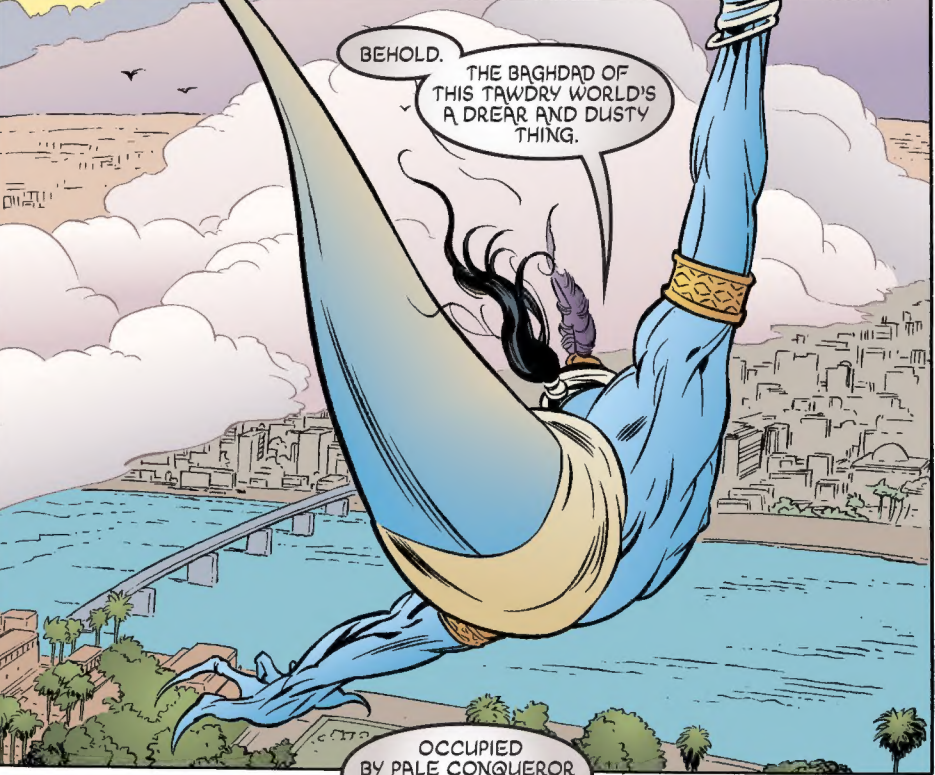


HARD TO SAY, DEAR SHERIFF.

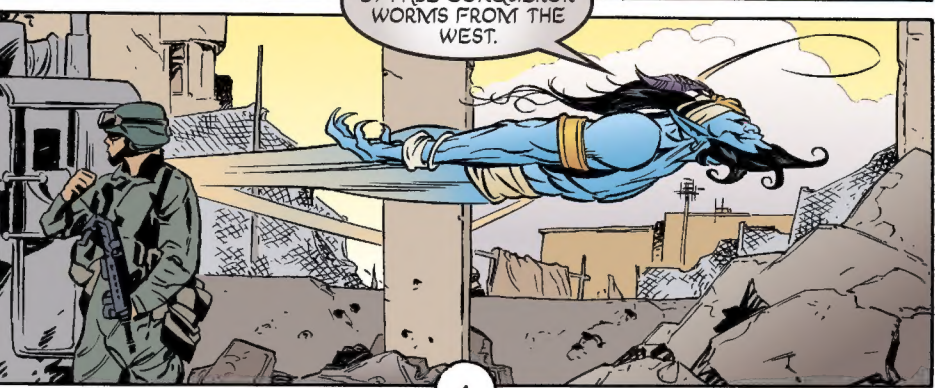
HOURS AT MOST.



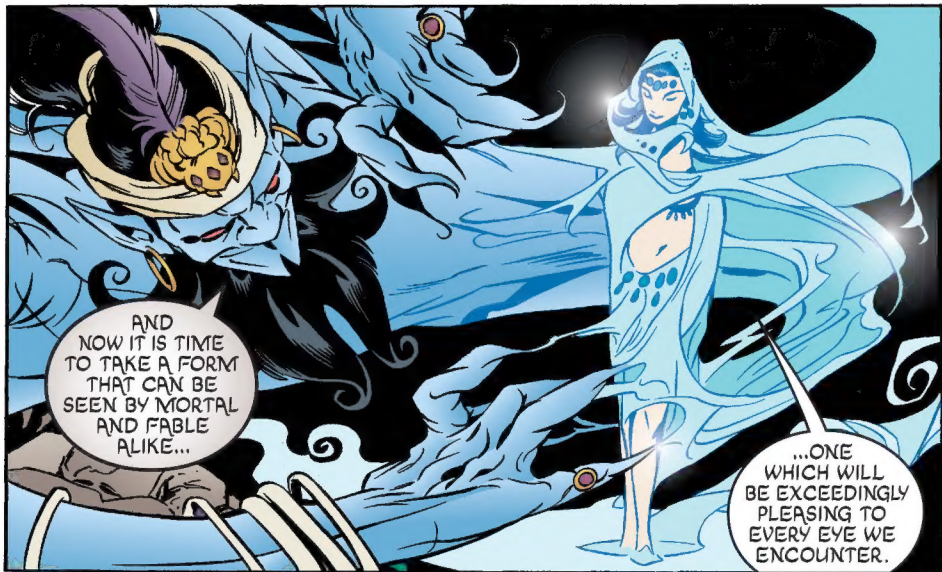
"AT PRESENT THE THING IS ON ITS WAY TO BAGHDAD, ON ITS FIRST MISSION."



BEHOLD. THE BAGHDAD OF THIS TAWDRY WORLD'S A DREAR AND DUSTY THING.



OCCUPIED BY PALE CONQUEROR WORMS FROM THE WEST.



AND NOW IT IS TIME TO TAKE A FORM THAT CAN BE SEEN BY MORTAL AND FABLE ALIKE...

...ONE WHICH WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY PLEASING TO EVERY EYE WE ENCOUNTER.



OH MY GOD! SARGE, DO YOU SEE WHAT'S HEADING THIS WAY?



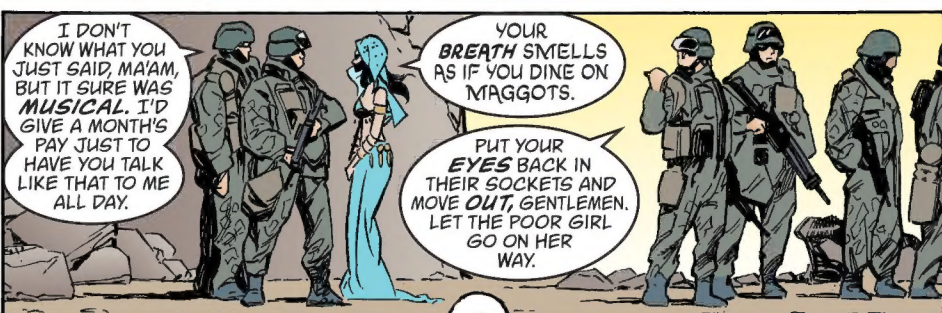
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE LADY?

ARE YOU LOST? DO YOU NEED AN ESCORT TO FIND YOUR WAY HOME?

REIN IT IN, JABROWSKI. WE'VE GOT A PATROL TO COMPLETE.

I DIDN'T KNOW IRAQI WOMEN WERE STILL ALLOWED TO DRESS LIKE THIS. YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF AN OLD STORYBOOK.

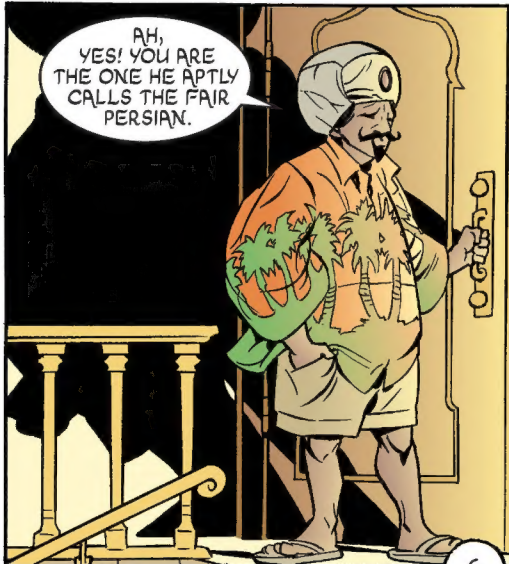
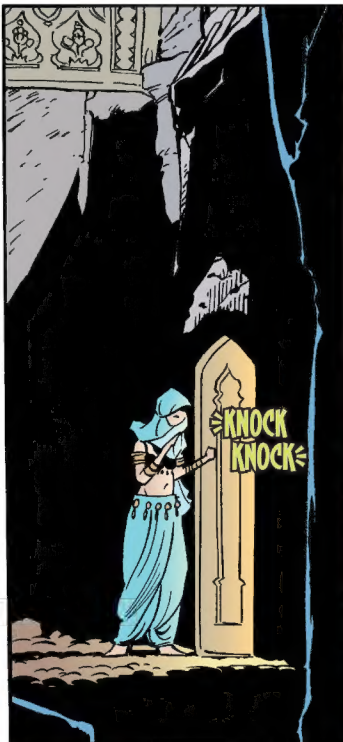
AND YOU LOOK LIKE A WET PILE OF FESTERING DUNG RECENTLY SHAT OUT OF A DISEASED PIG.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU JUST SAID, MA'AM, BUT IT SURE WAS MUSICAL. I'D GIVE A MONTH'S PAY JUST TO HAVE YOU TALK LIKE THAT TO ME ALL DAY.

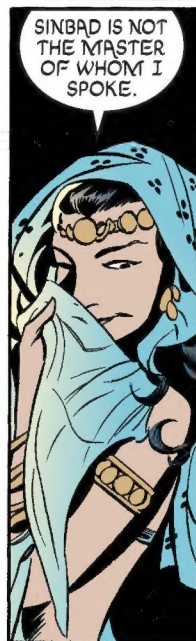
YOUR BREATH SMELLS AS IF YOU DINE ON MAGGOTS.

PUT YOUR EYES BACK IN THEIR SOCKETS AND MOVE OUT, GENTLEMEN. LET THE POOR GIRL GO ON HER WAY.





COME WITH ME.
SO, SINBAD HAS MADE PROGRESS WITH THE WESTERN SCUM?



SINBAD IS NOT THE MASTER OF WHOM I SPOKE.



LIKE YOU, CRAFTY SIDI, I SECRETLY SERVE WISE YUSUF. IT'S HIS MISSION I AM ON.

I BRING INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIM.

I'M ASTONISHED TO FIND YOU'RE WITH US. I DIDN'T KNOW YUSUF RECRUITED ALLIES TO OUR FACTION AMONG SINBAD'S HAREM.



YUSUF SPENT MANY LUSTY HOURS AMONG US WHEN SINBAD'S BACK WAS TURNED.

NOW THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME AT ALL. WHAT ARE OUR INSTRUCTIONS?



GATHER ALL WHO SERVE YUSUF'S ASCENDANCY TOGETHER TONIGHT FOR AN IMPORTANT MEETING.

IS THAT WISE? IN THE PAST WE'VE NEVER CONGREGATED MORE THAN TWO OR THREE AT A TIME. THOSE WERE ALWAYS YUSUF'S ORDERS.



NO MATTER. I SIMPLY NEEDED TO ASCERTAIN THE FULLNESS OF THE LIST WHICH APPEARED IN YOUR MIND THE MOMENT I INQUIRED OF THEM.

I'VE CAPTURED IT COMPLETE, AND SO YOU ARE OF NO FURTHER USE TO ME, SIDI NOUMAN, FAMOUS ABUSER OF HORSES.



HOW DARE YOU SPEAK SO TO ME!

MIND YOUR PLACE, SLAVE!

OH I WILL, SINCE MY PROPER PLACE IS AS YOUR DESTROYER.

SMACK!



NOW, HOW SHALL WE DETERMINE THE MANNER OF YOUR DEMISE, OH CELEBRATED HUSBAND TO CORPSE-EATERS?

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!



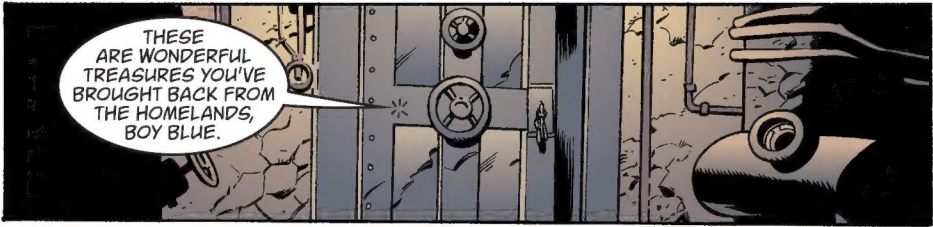
AIIIEEEEGGH!

DEVoured BY RATS! A FITTING END TO A DOG WHO'S OCCASIONALLY A MAN--OR IS THAT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?



NOW TO GO VISIT MY VENGEFUL ATTENTIONS ONTO THE TRAITOROUS SULTAN, LOSROUSCHAH.

AND SO ON, WORKING MY WAY DOWN THE LIST.



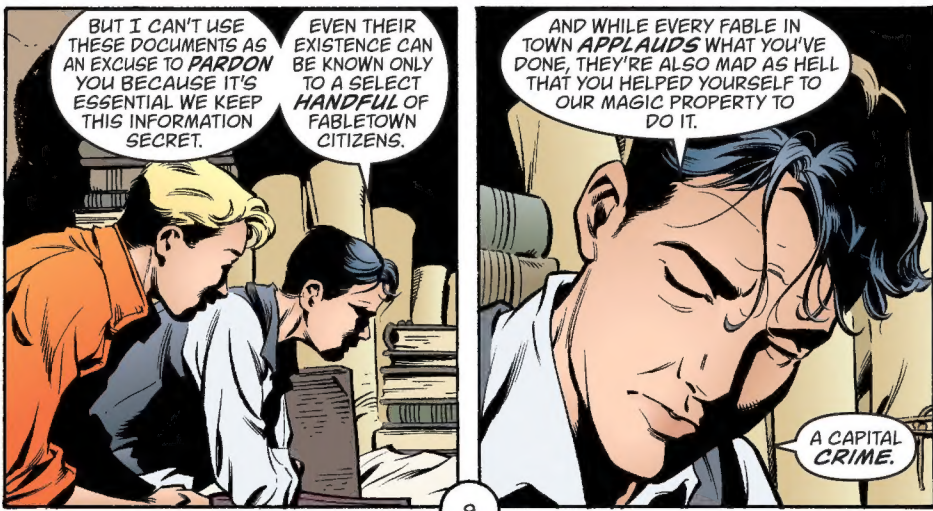
THESE ARE WONDERFUL TREASURES YOU'VE BROUGHT BACK FROM THE HOMELANDS, BOY BLUE.



VALUABLE ENOUGH TO BE WORTH CUTTING SOME TIME OFF MY DETENTION?

AH-- WELL, MAYBE WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT THAT.

YOU KNOW I THINK THE **WORLD** OF YOU, BLUE, AND IF IT WERE UP TO ME I'D HAVE YOU OUT OF HERE THIS **INSTANT**.



BUT I CAN'T USE THESE DOCUMENTS AS AN EXCUSE TO **PARDON** YOU BECAUSE IT'S ESSENTIAL WE KEEP THIS INFORMATION SECRET.

EVEN THEIR EXISTENCE CAN BE KNOWN ONLY TO A SELECT **HANDFUL** OF FABLETOWN CITIZENS.

AND WHILE EVERY FABLE IN TOWN **APPLAUDS** WHAT YOU'VE DONE, THEY'RE ALSO MAD AS HELL THAT YOU HELPED YOURSELF TO OUR MAGIC PROPERTY TO DO IT.

A CAPITAL CRIME.



BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CHOP MY HEAD OFF.

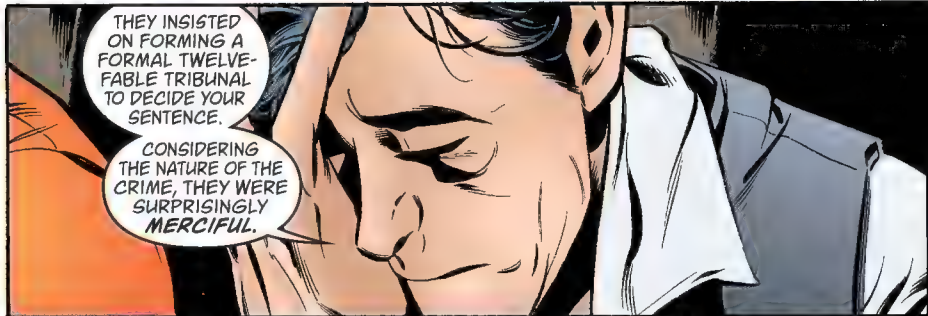
NO. OF COURSE NOT. I PROMISED YOU A LIGHT SENTENCE AND I'M GOING TO KEEP THAT PROMISE. ONLY--



I KNOW THAT LOOK. HERE COMES THE BAD NEWS.

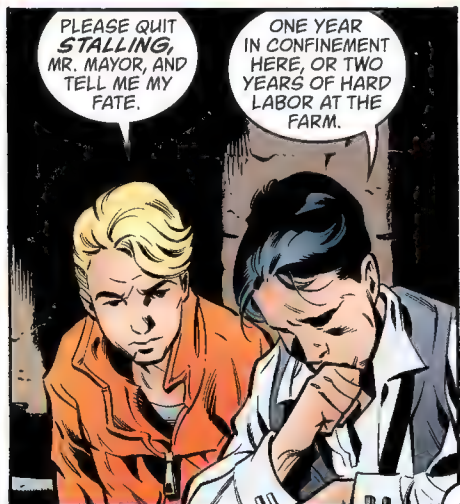
YOUR EXPLOITS ARE STILL STORY NUMBER ONE IN FABLETOWN, HERE AND AT THE FARM.

I WASN'T ABLE TO HANDLE THIS QUIETLY, LIKE I'D PLANNED.



THEY INSISTED ON FORMING A FORMAL TWELVE-MEMBER TRIBUNAL TO DECIDE YOUR SENTENCE.

CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF THE CRIME, THEY WERE SURPRISINGLY MERCIFUL.



PLEASE QUIT STALLING, MR. MAYOR, AND TELL ME MY FATE.

ONE YEAR IN CONFINEMENT HERE, OR TWO YEARS OF HARD LABOR AT THE FARM.





GOD HOW I **HATE** THIS MISERABLE JOB. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE TAKEN IT AWAY FROM KING COLE.

LIKE MOST OTHERS I JUST ASSUMED HE WAS NOTHING MORE THAN ANOTHER GLAD-HANDING SON OF A BITCH LIVING IT UP ON THE PEOPLE'S DIME.

URNS OUT HE KNEW HOW TO ORGANIZE, DELEGATE, SMOOTH RUFFLED FEATHERS AND GENERALLY GET THE JOB DONE. HE WAS A **GENIUS** AT IT.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, PRINCE CHARMING, YOU SHOULD'VE **CONSIDERED** THAT BEFORE YOU RAN FOR OFFICE.

TYPICALLY--IF SNOW'S STORIES ABOUT YOU ARE **TRUE**, AND I BELIEVE THEY ARE--YOU SIMPLY SAW SOMETHING YOU WANTED AND CHASED AFTER IT, WITHOUT ANY MORE THOUGHT THAN THAT.

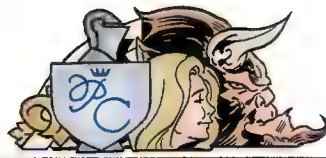
WISDOM, JUDGMENT AND DELAYED GRATIFICATION ARE **ALIEN** TO YOU.

YOU'RE ENTIRELY DEFINED BY WHAT YOU COVET.

AND NOW YOU EXPECT ME TO FEEL **SORRY** FOR YOU? NOT A CHANCE. MY COMPASSION'S RESERVED FOR THOSE YOU SCREW OVER IN THE PROCESS OF GETTING WHAT YOU WANT.

YOU WANTED TO BE MAYOR AND NOW YOU ARE. SO **PLEASE** QUIT CRYING ABOUT HOW TOUGH THE JOB IS AND **DO** IT.

YOU CAN START BY HAULING ALL OF THIS **CRAP** OUT OF MY CELL SO I CAN GET SOME **SLEEP**.



WHERE THE HELL IS PRINCE CHARMING?

OUT TO LUNCH

I DON'T KNOW. I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE.

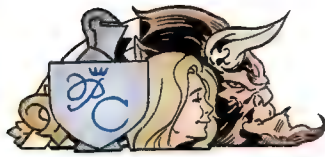
WELL, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT ANY LONGER.

LET'S BE CLEAR ON THE ORDER OF ACTION.

FLY AS SOON AS YOU TURN THE KEYS AND OPEN THE DOOR. STEP TO ONE SIDE. DON'T TRY TO GO IN YOURSELF.

THE THREE CROW BROTHERS ARE FIRST THROUGH THE DOOR, FOLLOWED BY ME, GRIMBLE, THEN KING COLE.

I'LL ORDER THEM TO GET FACE-DOWN ON THE FLOOR.



I WANT GUNS IN FACES **REAL** FAST AND **REAL** **MEAN**. LEAVE THEM NO CHANCE TO EVEN **THINK** OF RESISTING.

BUT, **PLEASE** GOD, NO SHOOTING.



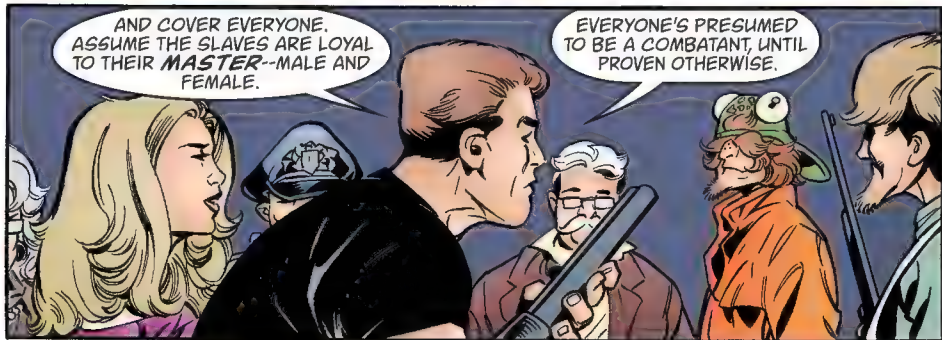
UNLESS ONE OF THEM MAKES A MOVE TOWARDS THE D'JINN BOTTLE. IT'S **VITAL** WE CAPTURE THAT INTACT.

IF ANYONE **DOES** TRY, SHOOT IMMEDIATELY.



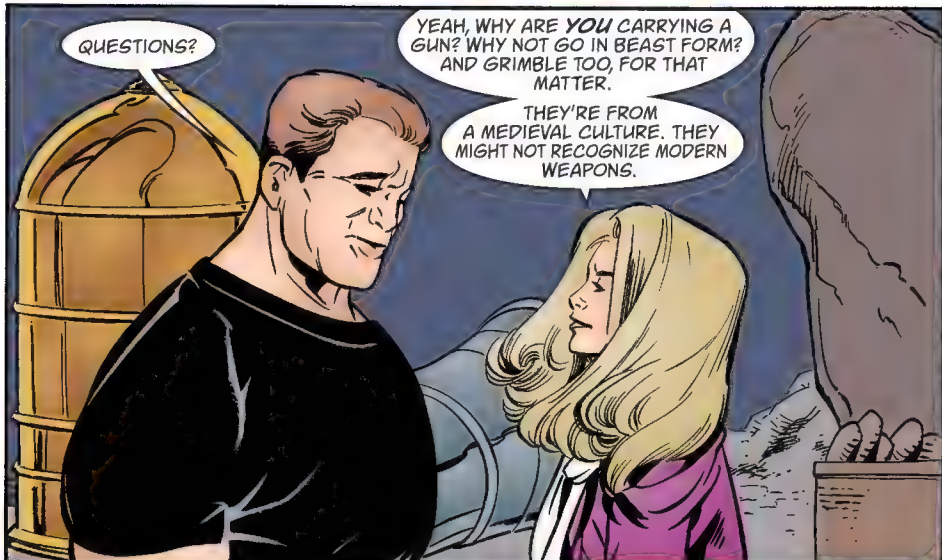
AND **DON'T** GET CUTE. THREE SHOTS TO THE CHEST.

OUTSIDE OF THE MOVIES, NO ONE GETS AWAY WITH SHOOTING TO WOUND.



AND COVER EVERYONE. ASSUME THE SLAVES ARE LOYAL TO THEIR **MASTER**--MALE AND FEMALE.

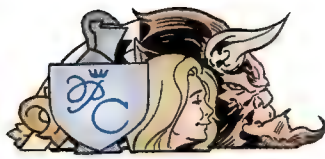
EVERYONE'S PRESUMED TO BE A COMBATANT, UNTIL PROVEN OTHERWISE.



QUESTIONS?

YEAH, WHY ARE **YOU** CARRYING A GUN? WHY NOT GO IN BEAST FORM? AND GRIMBLE TOO, FOR THAT MATTER.

THEY'RE FROM A MEDIEVAL CULTURE. THEY MIGHT NOT RECOGNIZE MODERN WEAPONS.





WHY DO WE HAVE TO SIT OUT IN THIS SLUM ALL NIGHT, SARGE?

SOMEONE REPORTED SCREAMING IN THIS AREA.

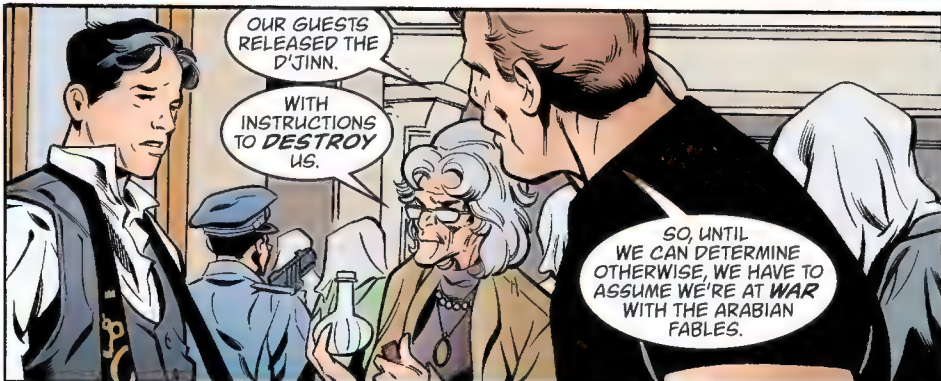
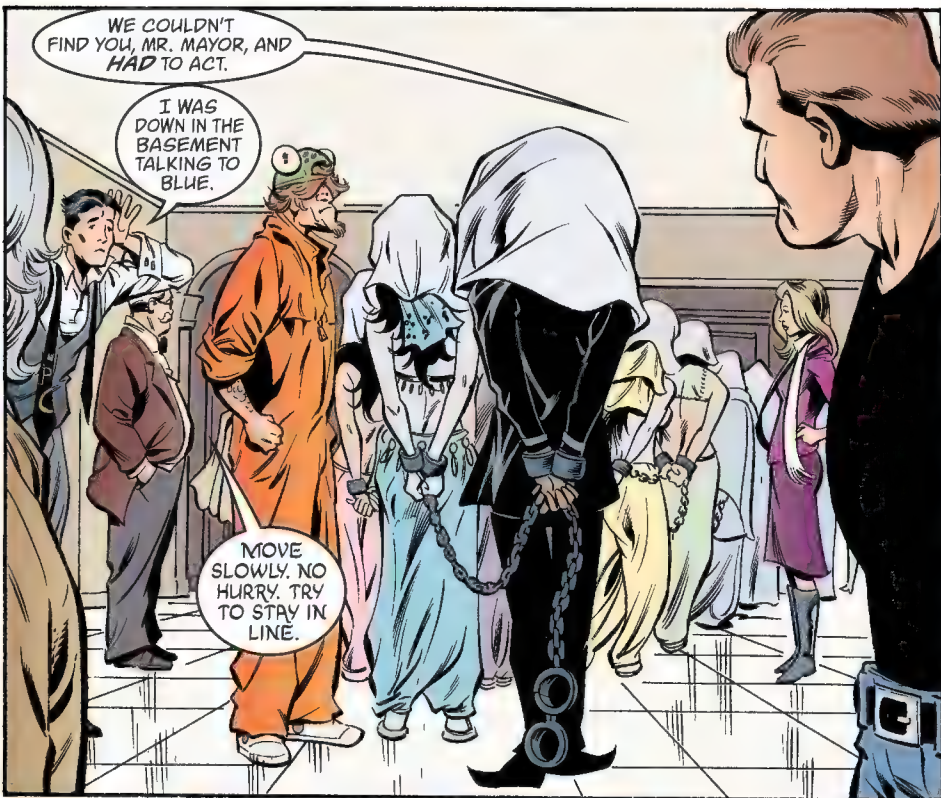
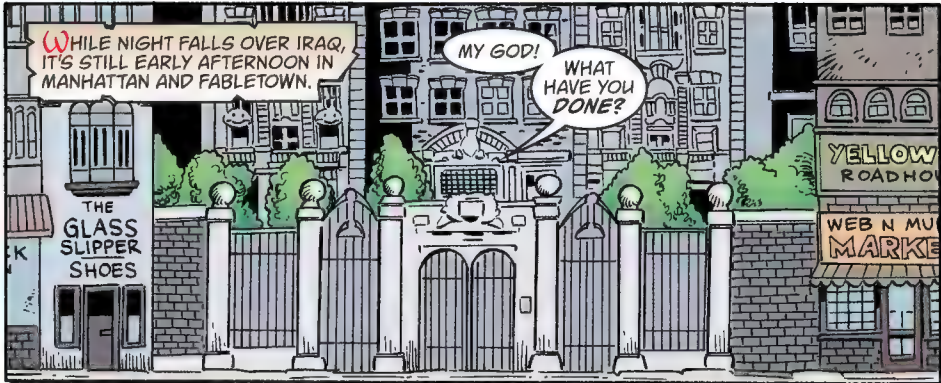
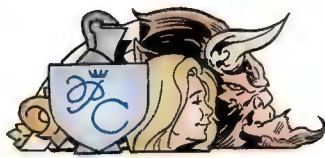
MY WORK HERE IS DONE.

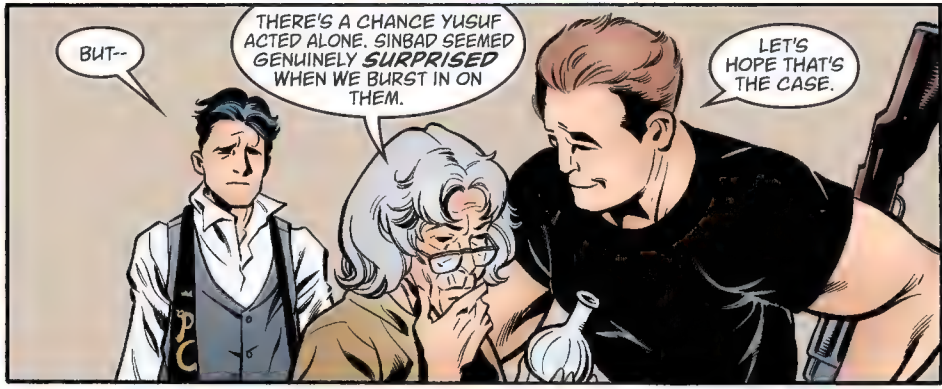


ALL OF YUSUF'S FACTION HAVE BEEN **PLUCKED** FROM THE VINE.



NOW TO ATTEND TO THE **SECOND** WISH.

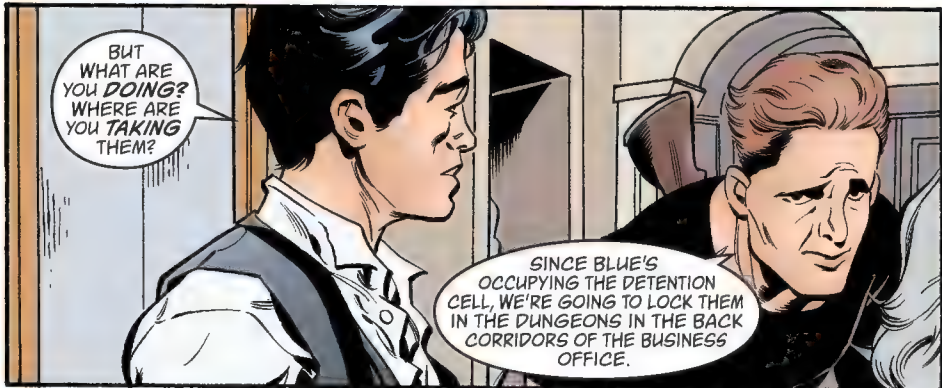




BUT--

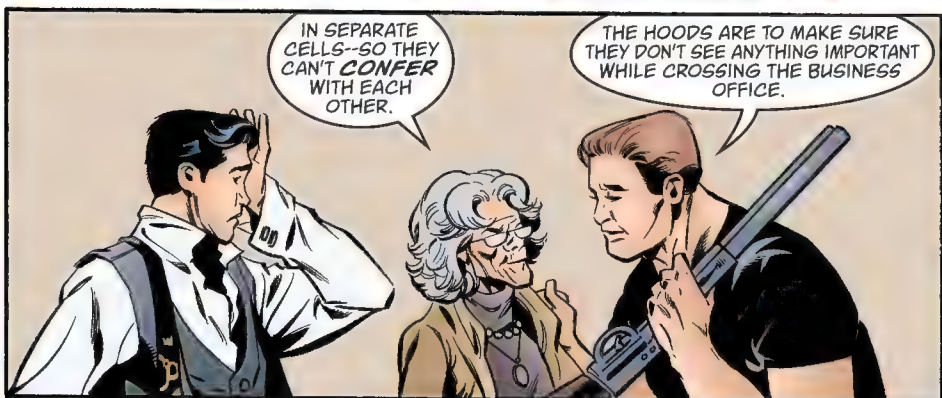
THERE'S A CHANCE YUSUF ACTED ALONE. SINBAD SEEMED GENUINELY **SURPRISED** WHEN WE BURST IN ON THEM.

LET'S HOPE THAT'S THE CASE.



BUT WHAT ARE YOU **DOING**? WHERE ARE YOU **TAKING** THEM?

SINCE BLUE'S OCCUPYING THE DETENTION CELL, WE'RE GOING TO LOCK THEM IN THE DUNGEONS IN THE BACK CORRIDORS OF THE BUSINESS OFFICE.



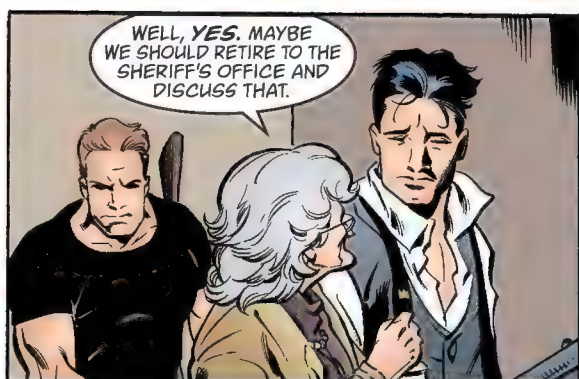
IN SEPARATE CELLS--SO THEY CAN'T **CONFER** WITH EACH OTHER.

THE HOODS ARE TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T SEE ANYTHING IMPORTANT WHILE CROSSING THE BUSINESS OFFICE.

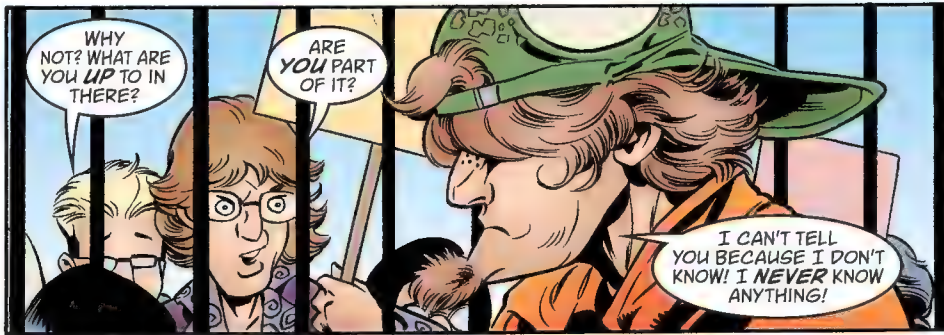


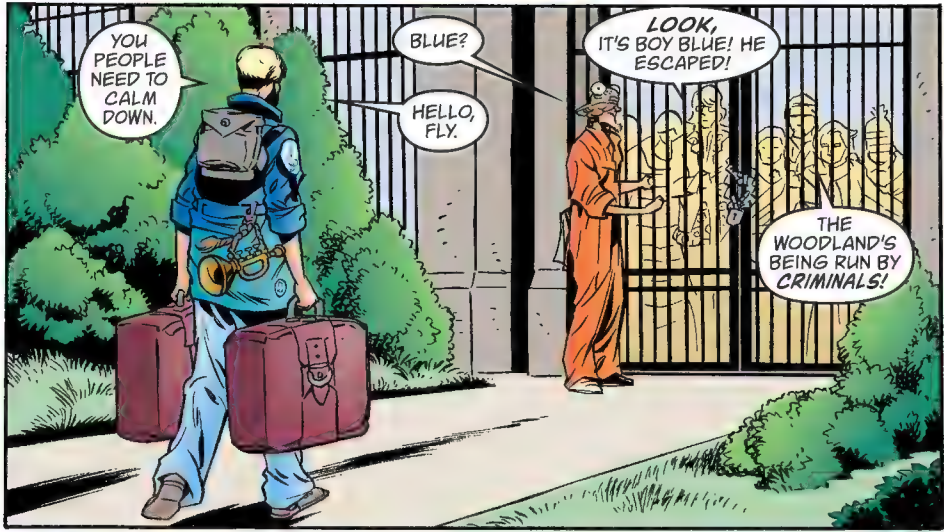
BUT WHAT'S THE **POINT**?

IF THE D'JINN IS ABOUT TO DESTROY US--



WELL, **YES**. MAYBE WE SHOULD RETIRE TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND DISCUSS THAT.



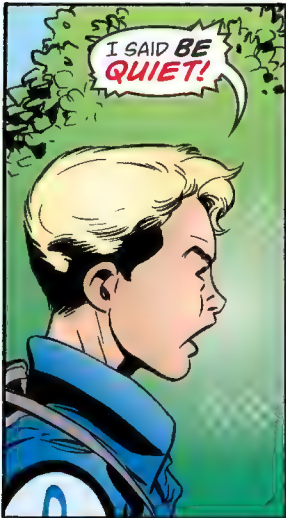


YOU PEOPLE NEED TO CALM DOWN.

BLUE?
HELLO, FLY.

LOOK, IT'S BOY BLUE! HE ESCAPED!

THE WOODLAND'S BEING RUN BY CRIMINALS!

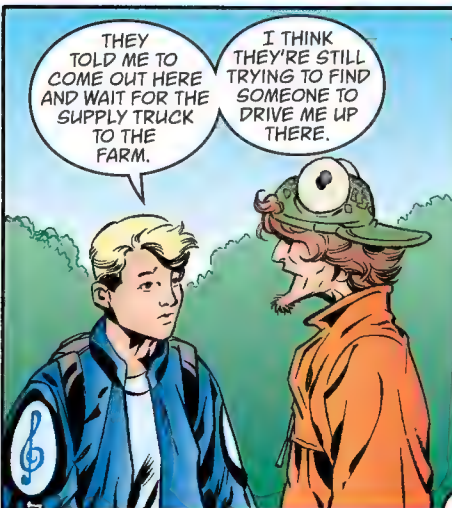


I SAID **BE QUIET!**



IF YOU'RE DETERMINED TO ACT LIKE A MOB, GO LIVE IN THE MUNDY, WHERE THEY PUT UP WITH THIS SORT OF UNCIVILIZED NONSENSE.

BLUE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF THE DETENTION CELL?



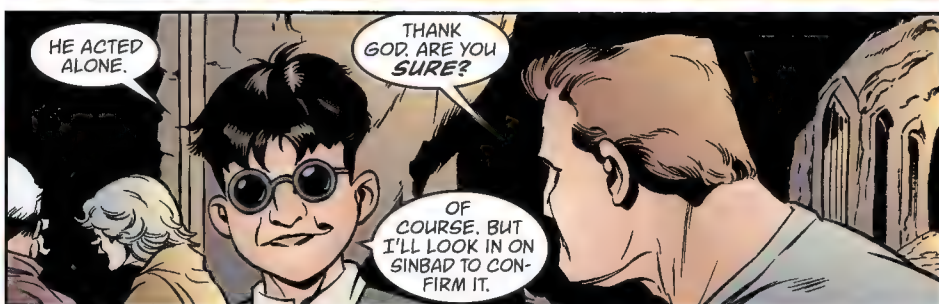
THEY TOLD ME TO COME OUT HERE AND WAIT FOR THE SUPPLY TRUCK TO THE FARM.

I THINK THEY'RE STILL TRYING TO FIND SOMEONE TO DRIVE ME UP THERE.



IT SEEMS I'M **DONE** HERE, FLY. I COULDN'T STAND BEING LOCKED UP FOR A YEAR, SO I'M HEADED UP TO THE FARM WITH ALL OF THE OTHER EXILES.

I EXPECT YOU TO LOOK AFTER RIDING HOOD FOR ME, OKAY? SHE NEEDS A FRIEND, AND YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD ONE TO ME.





"YES, YUSUF, YOUR CREATURE SPEEDS THIS WAY."



"NEARLY HERE, IN FACT."

YOU SHOULD BE TREMBLING WITH FEAR, WITCH! THIS IS NO MERE MINOR EFFRIT!

NOT EVEN YOUR POWERS CAN OVERCOME A FULL D'JINN!

TRUE. SO I DIDN'T EVEN TRY.

INSTEAD I USED MY POWERS TO AFFECT YOU. I ALTERED YOUR LANGUAGE.

WHAT YOU THOUGHT YOU SPOKE AND WHAT YOU ACTUALLY SPOKE TO THE D'JINN WERE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS.

YOUR FIRST WISH WAS ACTUALLY A COMMAND TO GO TO BAGHDAD AND WIPE OUT ANY OF THE ARABIAN FABLES WHO WERE SECRETLY ALLIED TO YOU.

YOUR SECOND WISH WAS A COMMAND FOR HIM TO THEN COME HERE AND DEVOUR YOU-- SLOWLY AND OH SO VERY PAINFULLY.

AND OF COURSE YOUR THIRD ACTUAL WISH WAS FOR--

OH, HE'S HERE ALREADY. I GUESS YOU'VE RUN OUT OF TIME.

NO! NO! YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

YOU'RE FILTHY, UNCIVILIZED BARBARIANS!



AND NOW
IT'S TIME FOR MY
SLOW-ROASTED
SUPPER.

PLEASE!
IN THE NAME OF
HUMAN *COMPASSION!*
KILL ME *QUICKLY*, BEFORE
THIS THING GOES TO
WORK ON ME!

SORRY,
YUSUF, BUT YOU
SAID IT YOURSELF.
I'M JUST AN OLD
BACK-COUNTRY
WITCH.

WHO AM
I TO EVEN *ATTEMPT*
TO INTERFERE WITH THE
MOST SOLEMN DEALINGS
BETWEEN A SORCERER OF
YOUR GRAND STATURE
AND HIS DUTIFUL
DEMON?

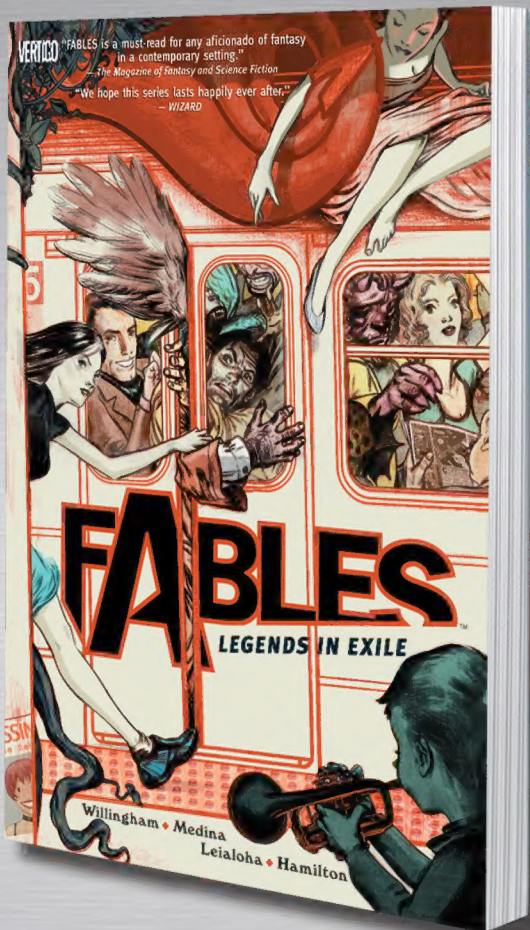
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BILL WILLINGHAM

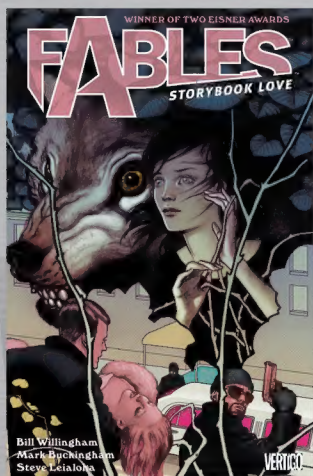
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
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- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
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- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
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- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



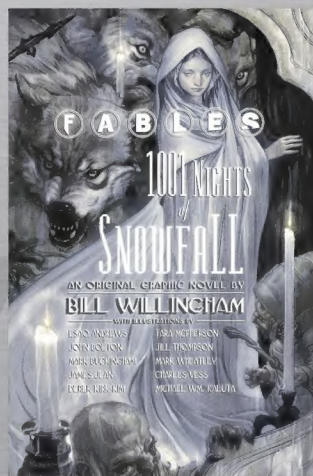
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